

The Old Paths

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"Jacob's Address To Pharaoh"

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flesh, which wage war against your soul" (I Pet. 2:11). Friend, where are you headed on your "sojourn"?

Upon learning that his son Joseph was alive, Jacob rejoiced, and with God's approval, heeded his son's request and moved to the land of Goshen in the country of Egypt (Gen. 45:26-46:5). This move ultimately helped them endure the famine that was ravaging the land (Gen. 41:29-30, 54, 57, 43:1, etc.). After Jacob arrived in Egypt with the 65 others in his family (Gen. 46:26), he was called before Pharaoh (Gen. 47:1-2). Pharaoh respected Joseph, and this is made clear as we note the respect he showed Joseph's father. He even asked Jacob how old he was (Gen. 47:8)! In response to this question, Jacob answered, *"The days of the years of my sojourning are 130 years. Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their sojourning"* (Gen. 47:9).

This is the only occasion the Bible records where Jacob spoke to Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt. Yet, he said quite a lot when he answered the king's question! In fact, as we read this passage, we can see that there are several things that we can learn and apply to ourselves. Please read this verse again and then consider the following lessons from Jacob.

Life Is Described As "Sojourning."

Jacob understood what we in our "enlightened," and "technologically advanced" society do not understand; i.e., life is a "sojourn!" In simple terms, a "sojourn" has to do with a journey, or travel from one place to another. In a literal sense, Jacob had been on a "pilgrimage," (as did Abraham and Isaac) for he traveled often, having no permanent home. The New Testament speaks about this fact stating that he, as well as his father and grandfather *"went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents..."* (Heb. 11:9). This chapter goes on to say, *"These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth"* (Heb. 11:13).

In like manner, our life is a "sojourn," a journey, in which we are headed toward eternity. Friends, do we realize that there is an eternity facing us — an eternity with God, or an eternity with Satan, depending upon how we live on earth (Matt. 25:34, 41, 46)? As the words of the well-known hymn state: "This world is not my home, I'm just a-passing through ...". Do we believe this? Life truly is a "sojourn" and this is what Jacob meant in his answer to Pharaoh. The question we must answer is, "Where are we going?" Peter said, *"Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles, abstain from the passions of the*

Life Is Short.

Though Jacob had at this point lived 130 years, he said his days were "few"! This sentiment was not unique with Jacob, though. Job said, *"Man who is born of a woman is few of days, and full of trouble"* (Job 14:1). He also said, *"My days are swifter than a runner; they flee away; they see no good"* (Job 9:25). Moses remarked, *"...We bring our years to an end like a sigh"* (Ps. 90:9). He also said, *"The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away"* (Ps. 90:10).

These passages state what all men soon realize — life is short! Days and weeks slip by before we realize it, unfortunately. (Can you believe we're already half-way through May, 2012?) At the same time, eternity is long. Therefore, it is a waste of life to only be focused on the things of this life. Paul said we need to be *"Making the best use of the time, because the days are evil"* (Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5). Knowing the brevity of life, Jacob desired a *"better country"* (Heb. 11:16). Knowing the brevity of life, is OUR focus on *"things that are above"* (Col. 3:1)? Are we looking for that *"better," "heavenly"* country? If not, why not? Life is short! Let us spend the time wisely in preparing for eternity! Paul said *"...behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation"* for a reason (II Cor. 6:2)! He understood that life is short.

Life Was Difficult For Jacob.

Jacob said his days had been *"few and evil."* Understand, Jacob was not accus-

ing God of wickedness, nor anything of the sort. Put simply, he was stating that his life had been one of hardship. (Some versions say "difficult" or "unpleasant".) Sadly, much of the hardship he endured he brought upon himself. Some years after the life of Jacob, Moses told the people, *"be sure your sin will find you out"* (Num. 32:23). Jacob, Moses' ancestor was a prime example of the truth of that statement!

Consider for a moment the fact that his uncle and ten of his sons deceived him at different points in his life (Gen. 29:25, 31:7, 41, 37:32-35). How terrible to think of being deceived by those family members closest to you! Jacob suffered at the hands of his uncle who deceived him about Rachel as well as changed his wages 10 times in 20 years. Later, Jacob was deceived by his sons into thinking Joseph was dead. For 22 years of his life, he suffered great grief in mourning for Joseph! Truly, his days were unpleasant and difficult having to bear up under such strain (Gen. 47:9)!

Yet, don't forget that Jacob, in his youth, brought a lot of this on himself in that he deceived his own father (Gen. 27:18-29, 35)! *"Be sure your sin will find you out."* We are familiar with the old saying: "What goes around, comes around" and Jacob is living proof that that statement is true. Jacob had to endure the physical consequences of his sin for a majority of his adult life (at least 42 years), it seems.

Conclusion

From this text, are we to assume that his life was nothing but hardship and despair until he died? By no means! Remember, Jacob was the recipient of many of God's blessings, which no

doubt brought him great joy. Consider the fact that he was chosen of God before his birth (Gen. 25:23). He had the same blessing promised to him that was promised to Abraham and Isaac (Gen. 28:13-15). Furthermore, he had prosperity which God gave him (Gen. 30:43, 31:8-9). He was blessed by being named *"Israel"* (Gen. 32:28). He had many children and grandchildren which brought him great joy, as well as being considered a "hero" of faith (Heb. 11:21). Yes, he was a man greatly blessed by God, but at the same time, he was a man who endured great difficulty in his life at the hands of others.

How about you, dear friend? Since we will not live to see 130, let alone 147, (Jacob's age at death, Gen. 47:28) we ought to be ever aware of how short our lives are (Ps. 90:10)! Have they been *"few and evil"*? If so, who is to blame for the difficulties? Will we be foolish and blame God for our problems (Jacob did not do such a thing), or will we stand up and accept responsibility, facing the consequences of our bad decisions? *"Be sure your sin will find you out"* holds true even in the 21st century!

May we be ever aware of the blessings God gives to us. God sends us "unconditional" blessings (ex: Matt. 5:45), but He also show-

ers blessings upon those who are His children. However, if you're not a child of God, having had your sins washed away by the blood of Christ in baptism, then you cannot receive these spiritual blessings. How tragic it would be for one to live and die and never know the peace in Christ. Truly, that would be a person whose days were *"few and evil"*!! There is saving hope in Christ (Rom. 8:24), and may all of us endeavor to spend our "few days" on this earth serving Him as well as leading others to Him before it is everlastingly too late.

Some Spiritual Thoughts...

"The Christian welcomes any challenge that sends him back to the Bible for a restudy of every practice to which he subscribes or doctrine he may teach."

"Indifference and negligence can rob a man of power essential to victory whether secular or spiritual."

- Selected

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